LUTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

REVIEW OF UPSTART Section 53A-1a-1001

Annual Report

November 2009

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UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION REVIEW OF UPSTART

Utah State Office of Education
UPSTART (53A-1a-1001) Annual Report
November 2009

Executive Summary

Participation

Waterford enrolled 1,308 students in the spring of 2009. The ethnicity of these students was reflective of the ethnicity of all Utah students, as was their suburban, urban, rural location. All 41 school districts were represented. 61% of

the families enrolled are at or below 200% of poverty level. 408 families received a grant-funded computer.

As of September30, 2009 there were 1,382 children and 1,303 families participating. Of these, 353 children and

345 families ended participation due to entering kindergarten in the fall of 2009.

Usage

Waterford research conducted prior to this product indicates that students will make academic progress at a fairly specific usage level: 15 minutes per day, 75 minutes per week, 1,100 total before program effectiveness is significant.

Participants are averaging approximately 90 minutes of usage per week. 76 participants were asked to return the equipment

due to non- or limited usage.

Students who ended participation due to enrollment in Kindergarten averaged 1,378 minutes of usage before exiting the

program.

Student Achievement to Date

For students exiting the program due to enrollment in kindergarten, the average performance on the Activities was

91%.

Independent External Evaluation

The independent external evaluation will be conducted by a firm named Evaluation and Training Institute Consulting, and will begin this month. The vendor was selected using carefully honored RFP procedures. The Utah State Office of

Education, Waterford Research Institute, and the assessment vendor will agree on a research design, finalize the contract, and

begin implementation immediately.

Section 2: Selected Statistics

Funds Expended:

Allocation FY2009: 2,500,000

Expended from FY2009 allocation: 1,939,134.24

Evaluation: 150,000

Total expended and encumbered: 2,089,134.24

Implementation Status:

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Number of student enrolled in Spring of 2009: 1,308
Ethnicity of the 1,308 students:
         Caucasian: 1,047 (79%)
         Hispanic: 180 (14%)
         Asian/Pacific Islander: 324 (3%)
         Native American/Alaskan Native: 20 (2%)
         African American: 14 (1%)
         Other: 13 (1%)
Primary language of parents of the 1,308 students:
         English: 1,217 (93%)
         Spanish: 91 (7%)
Primary language of 1,308 participants:
         English: 1,187 (91%)
         Spanish:
Number of school districts the original 1,308 students represent: 40
SES of the families of the original 1,308 students:
         Under 200% of poverty: 801 (61%)
         Over 200% of poverty: 507 (39%)
Population density of the families of the original 1,308 students:
         Urban: 574 (44%)
         Suburban: 576 (44%)
        Rural (158 (12%)
Number of school districts the original 1,308 students represent: 40
Number of families receiving grant-funded computers: 408
Ethnicity of families receiving grant-funded computers:
         Caucasian: 245 (60%)
        Hispanic: 134 (33%)
         Other: 29 (7%)
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The following numbers are as of September 30, 2009

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Number of homes participating: 1,303

Number of children participating: 1,382

Number of families who ended participation due to children entering kindergarten in Fall of 2009: 345

Number of children who ended participation due to entering kindergarten in Fall of 2009: 353

Number of children enrolled in Fall of 2009: 532
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Student Achievement Measure:

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Results of internal measure (Waterford Assessments of Core Skills—WACS) for students exiting program and entering kindergarten:
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Average score on Activities: 91%

Average score on Activities repeated in order to achieve mastery: 94%

Average usage before exiting: 1,378 minutes (1,100 is the amount of minutes identified by research as the critical level of usage that must be reached before the program effectiveness is significant).

The independent evaluation will begin with the students entering the program in the Fall of 2009.

Complete Report

UPSTART Annual Report

Waterford Research Institute (WRI), a nonprofit founded in 1976 with a mission to use technology to help provide educational equity and excellence for all children, was selected to administer the UPSTART Program in March 2009.

As planned and administered by WRI, UPSTART (Utah Preparing Students Today for A Rewarding Tomorrow) provides a unique response to the need for preschool training in Utah, providing the State's youngest students with access in their homes to outstanding instruction in reading, math, and science. The overarching goal of Waterford's UPSTART Program is to provide truly individualized instruction, serving children with the greatest needs while at the same time challenging gifted children to reach their full potential.

UPSTART Programmatic Goals

Waterford's initial goal for the Year 1 UPSTART Program was to provide 1,300 children—30% of whom would represent low-income families—with a rich and full curriculum of math, reading, and science; a multi-sensory tutoring program for the one child in five that research has shown will need tutoring; and a computer-adaptive test that can test children who cannot read and provide data for parents and evaluators.

Program Software

Waterford's approach to implementation was comprised of:

• Rusty and Rosy Learn with Me[™] (which delivers three years of reading, math, and science via a small portable hard drive which plugs into the home computer through the USB port);

- Camp Consonant™ (a multi-sensory reading intervention program that provides an animated, web-centric, cost-efficient software tutoring system designed to help children with reading difficulties, including dyslexia); and
- Waterford Assessments of Core Skills™ (WACS) (a validated computer adaptive reading test that does not require the presence of a trained adult for administration and can establish an accurate indication of reading readiness or competence for children who cannot read).

A Unique Support System for Parents and Caregivers

WRI's UPSTART program recognizes the home and parents and caregivers as key educational resources. The home provides the benefit that education can take place seven days a week without the need to travel for access to instruction. Parents and caregivers can provide the motivation for children to insure that they spend the necessary time on program materials.

To capitalize on these key resources, WRI's UPSTART program provides a special support organization for participating children and their parents or caregivers. Unlike a typical support organization which is passive in relation to users except when there are problems and questions to be solved, the UPSTART support organization maintains frequent contact through written materials, DVD and online training, emails, and telephone calls. The strategy is to provide families with a steady stream of data on children's usage, performance, and needs, as well as to introduce motivational strategies for maintaining parent and student interest.

Since April 1, UPSTART User Support personnel have handled a total of more than 17,000 phone calls related to program inquiries, registration and pre-registration, programmatic and technological inquiries, usage, and motivational strategies.

Results To-Date

During the first eight months of Year 1, UPSTART has proven:

- There is widespread interest in a home-based pre-Kindergarten program among Utah's parents. 1,730 families applied for the initial 1,300 program slots and another 916 have pre-registered for year two.
- Despite concerns to the contrary, a technology-based program can cut across socioeconomic lines to reach all of Utah's children. 61% of UPSTART families are of lower
 socioeconomic status as defined in the UPSTART bill language—"an income below 200% of the Federal poverty
 guideline." This is more than double the bill's requirement that "at least 30% of the preschool children who
 participate in UPSTART shall be from low-income families." We had not expected to find so many of these families
 already had a computer and Internet service in their homes.
- The same program can reach both English- and Spanish-speaking homes if training and support are provided in both languages.

Overall, 14% of UPSTART participants are Latino, and 33% of families receiving equipment from the program are Latino. To ensure these families have full access to the program, Waterford has provided UPSTART websites in both English and Spanish (http://www.utahupstart.org/index_es.html) and on-line and in-person training in both languages. Waterford recently had the Utah Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines translated into Spanish for the Spanish-language website. All UPSTART materials and correspondence are made available in both English and Spanish and 60% of the UPSTART User Support Team is bilingual.

- Access to the Internet can be provided to all corners of Utah. When traditional Internet
 service was not available, Waterford has used wireless cards and satellite dishes to ensure access to the Internet
 from Vernal to Ibapah and Logan to Blanding.
- Children will use the program as "prescribed." Waterford's research had shown that usage would be the key to the success of the UPSTART program and that the key marker for usage is 1100 minutes—after that the child's progress literally takes off exponentially! To attain that goal, all families participating in the program were asked to pledge that children would use the program at least 75 minutes a week. Usage results have shown that the program's first "graduates," who had only four months on the program before they entered Kindergarten, used the program for an average of 1,378 minutes. We were thrilled to learn that the children continuing in the program—those not entering Kindergarten until 2010—have exceeded the 75-minute a week requirement and used the program an average of 92 minutes a week. Overall, this group of children has worked on the program an average of 1,902 minutes to-date, far surpassing the 1100-minute mark.
- Technology is a powerful educational provider. All children in UPSTART are tested when they begin the program and re-tested to measure gains. When the UPSTART children entering Kindergarten took the program assessment for the second time, results showed that with only four months in the program they had made significant gains in reading comprehension, sight words, vocabulary, letter sound, nonsense words, and blending—all important markers for reading success.

Children continuing in the program recently completed their second (mid-point) assessment and showed significant gains in blending, initial sound, letter recognition, letter sound, nonsense words, reading comprehension, real words, sight words, and vocabulary—again, all important markers for reading success.

It is too early in the Program to understand what most children will experience in terms of learning gains, but early indicators for UPSTART are positive. More data will be available once children have had a full year on the program.

WRI believes the UPSTART Program has shown that with the right training and support, technology can transform the home into an exciting and successful learning environment uniquely individualized to serve each child's learning needs. And, in funding UPSTART, Utah has become the leader in the implementation of this revolutionary approach.

Waterford is pleased to provide the following information required by UPSTART legislation to be reported by November 30th each year.

The number of families volunteering to participate in UPSTART:

- A total of 1,730 families volunteered to participate in the first year of UPSTART.
- Initially, by terms of the UPSTART Year 1 contract, Waterford's goal was to serve 1,300 families. Waterford achieved that goal, enrolling 1,303 families (1,382 children counting multiples) for Year 1. The other 427 families were placed on a Year 1 wait list.
- When 345 families sent their UPSTART children to Kindergarten in September 2009 and returned their equipment,
 Waterford enrolled an additional 300 children from the wait list who were still interested in participating in the program.
- A pleasant surprise was how many parents used the program for their other children as well as the child participating in UPSTART. Using the parent manager feature of Rusty and Rosy Learn with Me™, UPSTART families added 592 children to the core program in addition to the UPSTART children. These children were as young as three to as old as ten.

Altogether, 2,274 children will have benefited from the UPSTART Program in Year 1 (the 1,382 children in the initial 1,303 homes; the 300 children from the wait list added in November; and the 592 additional children added by their parents). Of that number, 1,682 (the 1,382 children in the initial 1,303 homes and the 300 children from the wait list added in

November) are defined as UPSTART participants, using the program's assessment tool and core reading, math, and science program and having access to the intervention program.

Because of demand, Waterford initiated pre-registration for Year 2.

• There are currently 916 families on the pre-registration list for Year 2.

Families requesting computers and furnished computers:

• Of the original 1303 families participating in the UPSTART program, 259 received both a computer and Internet access; 123 received computers only; and 26 received Internet access only, for a total of 408 families receiving some kind of equipment from the UPSTART program.

During Year 1, all families requesting computers and Internet access have been accommodated.

The frequency of use of the instructional software:

• To participate in the UPSTART program, families agreed to have children use the program at least 75 minutes a week. The average usage per week from April 22 - September 16 was 92 minutes.

Obstacles encountered with software usage, hardware, or providing technical assistance to families:

 Internet Access: Initially, there was some difficulty providing Internet service to the most remote portions of the State.

Wireless cards provided a simple and cost-effective solution for that obstacle. (Verizon Wireless provided free cards and a 12% monthly discount for service).

Waterford has encountered only three locations where the cards would not work: the Ibapah reservation, Kanab Canyon, and one home in Duchesne. In those instances, satellite dishes have been installed to successfully deliver Internet service.

• **Training Timing:** The UPSTART contract was signed at the beginning of March 2009 with a deliverable of having participants using the program in April 2009. Unfortunately, this did not provide sufficient time for in-person, on-site training for the initial group of participants.

The solution was to create dual-language online training for participants, including training modules entitled: UPSTART Overview; Starting the WACS Test; Understanding WACS Reports; Getting the Most Out of Rusty and Rosy Learn with Me; Installing the UPSTART Software; Child's Navigation Buttons; and UPSTART Parent Resources.

The modules continue to be available on both the English and Spanish UPSTART websites.

During the summer months, a team of Waterford trainers traveled across the State to host a series of in-person Town Hall meetings. The meetings were designed to give parents and caregivers a chance to ask questions about the program and receive additional training. They also proved to be an excellent opportunity for Waterford to get feedback on the early phases of the program. The 35 Town Hall locations were: Alpine, Beaver, Blanding, Bountiful, Brigham City, Cedar City, Draper, Duchesne, Heber City, Herriman, Honeyville, Huntington, Ibapah, Junction, Kamas, Kanab, Manti, Moab, Morgan, Mt. Pleasant, Murray, North Logan, Ogden, Panguitch, Park City, Price, Provo, Randolph, Richfield, Salt Lake City, Spanish Fork, Tooele, Vernal,

Washington City, and West Valley City. All trainings were offered in both English and Spanish.

For participants from the wait list entering the program in November, Waterford has planned in-person sessions in Salt Lake City, Provo, Ogden, Logan, and St. George, where the children will be given the initial WACS assessment and parents will receive training prior to receiving their drives or computers.

In-Home Assessment: Programmatically, the only difficulty encountered was with the initial assessment of the
children in the home. Waterford learned that parents were inclined to help their children with the test, despite
requests and training not to do so.

To alleviate this problem, Waterford has arranged for children coming into the program in November to receive the initial part of the assessment at a specified facility. At the same time, their parents will be trained on how to use the program as well as how to proctor the test when it is given again in six months. Waterford anticipates this will give a more accurate snapshot of the children's beginning levels of knowledge as well as provide parents with the information they need to be able to administer the test correctly.

The UPSTART bill language also requested information on two non-contractor (non-Waterford) items:

Student performance on pre-kindergarten and post-kindergarten assessments conducted by school districts and charter schools for students who participated in the home-based educational technology program and those who did not participate in the program:

While this is not a Waterford deliverable, as noted above, as part of the UPSTART contract, Waterford did assess UPSTART children at the beginning of the program and again when the children entered Kindergarten or were six months into their use of the program. As previously mentioned, the following academic gains were found:

- When the UPSTART children entering Kindergarten took the program assessment for the second time, results showed
 they had made significant gains in reading comprehension, sight words, vocabulary, letter sound, nonsense words, and
 blending—all important markers for reading success.
- Children continuing in the program recently completed their mid-point assessment and showed significant gains in blending, initial sound, letter recognition, letter sound, nonsense words, reading comprehension, real words, sight words, and vocabulary—again, all important markers for reading success.

The evaluation of the program conducted pursuant to 53A-1a-1006:

Waterford understands the contract for the external evaluation was awarded in October 2009 to the Evaluation and Training Institute, Los Angeles, California.

Additional demographic information for the initial group of 1303 families participating in UPSTART:

- ullet 22% of the participants were from the southern portion of the State and 78% were from the northern portion.
- Every school district in the State was represented.
- 12% of the homes were in rural Utah; 44% were suburban; and 44% were urban.

• 79% of the participating children were Caucasian; 14% were Latino; 1% were African-American; 2% were Native American; 3% were Asian/Pacific Islander; and 1% designated their ethnicity as "other." These numbers are an almost perfect match to the 2007-2008 Utah public schools enrollment demographics.

Advisory Committee

UPSTART legislation included the formation of an UPSTART Program Advisory Committee. The members of the committee have been extremely helpful during the initial phases of implementing the UPSTART program, and there is no question that the UPSTART program has been made better by their recommendations. Members of that committee include:

- Brenda Hales, Associate Superintendent for Student Achievement and School Success, Utah State Office of Education
- Janet Kaufman, Director of the Family Literacy Center, University of Utah
- Christine Kearl, Education Director for Governor Gary Herbert's Office
- Nancy Livingston, Literacy Specialist for the Utah State Office of Education
- Joanne Milner, Education Partnership Coordinator for Mayor Becker's Office;
- Dale Smith, Department Chair of Family and Human Studies at Salt Lake Community College
- Reed Spencer, K-12 Language Arts Coordinator for the Utah State Office of Education
- Cheryl Wright, Department Chair and Associate Professor of the Department of Family and Consumer Studies at the University of Utah
- Claudia Miner, UPSTART Program Director for the Waterford Institute
- Dustin Heuston, ex officio, Chairman of the Waterford Institute

Feedback from UPSTART Families

A number of families have written or called to express their appreciation for the UPSTART program, and Waterford is pleased to include a sampling of those comments is attached.